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Letter dated 27 August 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose the assessment of the work of the Security Council during the presidency of Belgium for the month of June 2007 (see annex). This assessment has been prepared under my own responsibility.

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Johan **Verbeke**
Ambassador
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Annex to the letter dated 27 August 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: English]

Assessment of the work of the Security Council during the Presidency of Belgium (June 2007)

Introduction

Under the Presidency of Belgium in June 2007, the Security Council held 28 meetings, including two open debates, two private debates, three briefings and two meetings with troop-contributing countries. The Council held consultations of the whole on 17 occasions. The Council adopted seven resolutions and nine presidential statements, and agreed on six statements to the press. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium, Karel de Gucht, presided over an open debate on the maintenance of international peace and security: natural resources and conflict on 25 June. On 26 June, he also presided over a briefing by the heads of the Security Council mission to Africa.

Africa

Liberia: Committee established pursuant to resolution 1521 (2003)

On 13 June, in consultations of the whole, Ambassador Dumisani Kumalo, Permanent Representative of South Africa and Vice-Chairperson of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1521 (2003) concerning Liberia, briefed the Council on the recent work and activities of the Committee and on the report of the Panel of Experts on Liberia dated 24 May 2007 (S/2007/340). He noted a number of positive developments. He referred to the termination of the diamond sanctions on 27 April with the adoption of resolution 1753 (2007) on the situation in Liberia and West Africa, to the discussions on possible cooperation with Interpol as envisaged in resolution 1699 (2006), to the recent adoption of the revised guidelines of the Committee and to the useful exchange of views with the Permanent Representative of Liberia to the United Nations on the travel ban and the assets freeze sanctions.

On 20 June, the Council, acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, unanimously adopted resolution 1760 (2007), by which it requested the Secretary-General to establish, within one month, a three-member Panel of Experts to conduct a follow-up assessment mission to Liberia and neighbouring States in order to investigate the implementation of the measures outlined in resolution 1521 (2003). The Panel is required to report on the situation to the Security Council, through the Committee, by 6 December 2007.

Sierra Leone

In a debate held on 8 June, in the presence of the Deputy Secretary-General, the President of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Judge George King, and the Prosecutor, Stephen Rapp, briefed the Council on the achievements of the Court and

the challenges before it, and presented its completion strategy. They reported that the trials of nine individuals were currently before the Special Court, including the trial of Charles Taylor, which opened on 4 June 2007 at The Hague. The President and the Prosecutor insisted on the fact that the Special Court continued to require the support of all Member States in securing funding as well as in negotiating and concluding agreements for the implementation of sentences, for the relocation of witnesses and in helping to deal with residual issues. In their statements, the Council members underlined the contribution of the Special Court to the restoration of peace and stability in Sierra Leone and reiterated the need for the collaboration of the international community. The representatives of Sierra Leone, Canada, the Netherlands and Nigeria (members of the Management Committee of the Special Court) as well as of Germany (speaking on behalf of the European Union) participated in the discussion in accordance with rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure.

Following the debate, the Council adopted on 28 June a presidential statement (S/PRST/2007/23), in which it reiterated its strong support for the Special Court, and noted its contribution to strengthening stability in Sierra Leone and bringing an end to impunity. The Council welcomed the commencement of the trial of Charles Taylor and the handing down of the first judgement of the Court on 21 June 2007 in the case of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council. The Council urged the international community to continue to support the Court as it worked to fulfil its mandate, and recognized that further arrangements would be needed to address residual matters.

The situation between Eritrea and Ethiopia

On 11 June, the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Hédi Annabi, briefed the Security Council, in consultations of the whole, on the situation between Eritrea and Ethiopia. The security situation in the Temporary Security Zone and the adjacent areas remained tense. Eritrea maintained restrictions on the freedom of movement of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) and continued to introduce new restrictions. Both Eritrea and Ethiopia continued to undertake intensive military activities in and around the Temporary Security Zone. The Assistant Secretary-General finally underlined that the Council during its visit to the region should encourage both countries to reconfirm their commitment to the Algiers Agreements, to restore the integrity of the Temporary Security Zone and to fully cooperate with UNMEE.

Somalia

On 14 June, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Lynn Pascoe, briefed the Council, in consultations of the whole, on his recent trip to Somalia. He stressed that only an inclusive and independent National Reconciliation Congress could succeed in offering an opportunity to re-establish consensus among Somalis on political, security, social and development issues. He urged the international community to create a secure and stable environment. While the possible deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping mission was feasible depending, among other things, on additional progress in the political track, the immediate priority must be to provide financial and logistical support to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). He urged the Transitional Federal Government to deliver aid to the needy population and to guarantee access to humanitarian workers.

On 14 June, the Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2007/19) on the situation in Somalia, in which it reiterated its support for the National Reconciliation Congress and its early convening, and expressed grave concern regarding the recent attacks by extremist elements in Somalia. Reiterating its call on States members of the African Union and on other States and partners to contribute to and support AMISOM, the Council also emphasized the urgent need for appropriate contingency planning for a possible United Nations mission, to be deployed if the Council decided to authorize such a mission.

The Council members continued their exchange of views on the situation in Somalia on 28 June, during a private debate held in the presence of the Prime Minister of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia, Ali Mohamed Gedi.

Sudan

On 7 June, the members of the Security Council received a public briefing from the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, on his activities pursuant to Council resolution 1593 (2005). At the end of April, arrest warrants were issued against two individuals, Ahmad Muhammad Harun, former Minister of State for the Interior and currently Minister for Humanitarian Affairs, and Ali Muhammad Ali Abd-al-Rahman, a Janjaweed/militia leader. The Prosecutor appealed to the Security Council to take the lead in calling on the Government of the Sudan to arrest the two individuals and ensure they were brought to account before the Court. The public briefing was followed by a private debate.

On 8 June, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Jan Eliasson, briefed the Council, in consultations of the whole, on his efforts and those of the African Union Special Envoy, Salim Ahmed Salim, to re-energize the stalled political process in Darfur. He stressed the need for an all-inclusive political dialogue that would include both signatories and non-signatories to the Darfur Peace Agreement. He presented an updated version of the African Union-United Nations road map for reaching that objective, and expressed confidence as far as its implementation was concerned. The Council members welcomed the road map and underlined the crucial role of the political process for ending the conflict in Darfur.

On 12 June, in consultations of the whole, Ambassador Marcello Spatafora, Permanent Representative of Italy and Chairperson of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005) concerning the Sudan, provided his 90-day report to the Council as required under that resolution. He reported on discussions within the Committee on the interim report of the Panel of Experts, which found that arms continue to flow into Darfur in violation of the provisions of resolution 1591 (2005).

On 13 June, the Council heard, in consultations of the whole, a briefing from the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Marie Guéhenno, on the technical consultations which had led to an agreement on the African Union-United Nations hybrid force. In addition to stressing the importance of the agreement, the Under-Secretary-General underlined that Khartoum had reconfirmed the need for a ceasefire and for an inclusive political process. The Council welcomed the agreement of the Government of the Sudan on the proposal for an African Union-United Nations hybrid operation, and called for its timely and full implementation. The Council also called upon all parties to immediately and

unconditionally respect the ceasefire and to further engage with the international community.

On 26 June, the Council was briefed by Ambassador Emyr Jones Parry, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, and Ambassador Dumisani Kumalo, Permanent Representative of South Africa, on the Sudan leg of the Security Council mission, which visited Khartoum on 17 June. They informed the Council that Khartoum had confirmed its unconditional acceptance of the hybrid force, and asked the Council to apply more pressure on the non-signatories to the Darfur Peace Agreement.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

On 11 June, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, in consultations on the whole, briefed the Security Council on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He noted that, despite the fact that elections had been held, the challenges that the Democratic Republic of the Congo continued to face remained considerable. He stressed the vulnerability of the political situation in general, the worsening of the security situation in the Kivu provinces and the lack of progress regarding security sector reform. He also called for the establishment of a consultation mechanism between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its international partners.

On 26 June, Ambassador Jean-Marc de la Sablière, Permanent Representative of France, reported on the visit of the Security Council mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on 20 June. He noted that the mission followed the Council's decision to extend the presence of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, while adapting its mandate to the post-transition situation. The mission met among others with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, William Lacy Swing, as well as with President Joseph Kabila, members of the Government, and key officials of the security sector. The need to establish a truly professional army was emphasized. As to the situation in the Kivus, the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo expressed their willingness to find a political and diplomatic solution without, however, totally excluding military action. On the democratic process, the mission stressed the importance of respecting the opposition's constitutional role. On the regional and diplomatic front, relations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda remain crucial to addressing the problems in the region.

Côte d'Ivoire

In consultations of the whole held on 11 June, the Council heard a briefing by the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations prior to the Security Council's visit to Côte d'Ivoire on 18 and 19 June.

On 26 June, Enrique Chávez, on behalf of the Permanent Representative of Peru, Ambassador Jorge Voto-Bernales, briefed the Council on the visit to Côte d'Ivoire. In Abidjan, the mission had met with the President and the Prime Minister. The mission's priority had been to welcome the ownership of the Ivorian peace process by the parties in the context of the Ouagadougou Agreement. The Agreement has created a new framework for addressing the outstanding problems of the crisis.

On 29 June, the Council adopted a presidential statement on the situation in Côte d'Ivoire (S/PRST/2007/25), in which it strongly condemned the attack on that day on an aircraft carrying the country's Prime Minister, Guillaume Soro. The Council stressed that it was critical that all parties continued to work within the framework of the Ouagadougou political agreement to settle the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire.

Côte d'Ivoire: Committee established pursuant to resolution 1572 (2004)

In consultations of the whole on 13 June, Ambassador Johan Verbeke, Permanent Representative of Belgium and Chairperson of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1572 (2004) concerning Côte d'Ivoire, briefed the Council members on the activities of the Committee and on the recent report of the Group of Experts (S/2007/349).

On 20 June, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 1761 (2007), by which it extended until 31 October 2007 the mandate of the Group of Experts monitoring the measures imposed by the Security Council. The Group of Experts was requested to submit a written update on the implementation of those measures to the Council, through the Committee, before 15 October 2007.

On 29 June, the Council adopted resolution 1763 (2007), by which it extended the mandate of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and of the French support troops until 16 July 2007.

Burundi

On 21 June, the Security Council agreed on a statement to the press on Burundi, welcoming the talks held on 17 June in Dar es Salaam between the President of Burundi, Pierre Nkurunziza, and the leader of the Forces nationales de Libération (Palipehutu-FNL), Agathon Rwasa, and the agreement reached during those talks, facilitating the implementation of the Ceasefire Agreement of November 2006.

Asia

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

On 1 June, the Secretary-General briefed the Security Council, in consultations of the whole, on the meeting of the Quartet held on 30 May in Berlin. The Secretary-General stated that he was deeply concerned by the escalation of violence in the occupied territories. He expressed appreciation for the role played by the League of Arab States and looked forward to future meetings between the Prime Minister of Israel, Ehud Olmert, and the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas. He called for encouraging President Abbas in his efforts to calm the situation.

On 20 June, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, Michael C. Williams, gave a briefing to the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East. He qualified the region as highly volatile and unstable, referring notably to the violent seizure of de facto political authority in Gaza by Hamas and the heavy fighting between the Lebanese Armed Forces and Fatah al-Islam in northern Lebanon. The Special

Coordinator underlined the need for the reopening of crossings in and out of Gaza and for providing humanitarian aid. He also urged the international community and Israel to politically and financially support the Palestinian Government, including through the release by Israel of withheld value added taxes and customs revenues. The briefing was followed by consultations of the whole.

Lebanon

On 1 June, the Secretary-General, in consultations of the whole, welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution 1757 (2007) on the establishment of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon as a clear message against impunity. He also expressed support to the Lebanese army and the efforts of the Prime Minister, Fouad Siniora, to restore stability in Lebanon.

On 11 June, the Council held consultations of the whole with the Special Envoy for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004), Terje Roed-Larsen. The Council then adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2007/17), in which it reiterated its deep concern at mounting information by Israel and other States of illegal movements of arms into Lebanon, and in particular across the Lebanese-Syrian border. The Council looked forward to the conclusions of the Lebanon independent border assessment team, and reiterated its call for strict respect for Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Council regretted that some provisions of resolution 1559 (2004) had yet to be fully implemented, particularly the disbanding and disarming of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias and the strict respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Lebanon. The Council urged all concerned to cooperate fully with the Government of Lebanon, the Security Council and the Secretary-General to achieve that goal. The Council also condemned the ongoing criminal and terrorist acts in Lebanon, including those perpetrated by Fatah al-Islam, and underlined the need to protect and assist civilians, notably the Palestinian refugees.

On 13 June, the Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2007/18), in which it unequivocally condemned the terrorist attack in Beirut, which killed at least nine persons, including a Member of Parliament, Walid Eido, and injured several others. The Council commended the determination of the Government of Lebanon to bring to justice the perpetrators, organizers and sponsors of that and other assassinations. The Council also called upon all parties in Lebanon and the region to show restraint and a sense of responsibility with a view to preventing any further deterioration of the situation in Lebanon.

On 18 June, the Council heard, in consultations of the whole, a briefing by the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations on a rocket attack launched against Israel from southern Lebanon on 17 June, following which the Council agreed on a statement to the press strongly condemning the attack, which constituted a serious breach of the cessation of hostilities and a flagrant violation of resolution 1701 (2006).

On 25 June, after hearing a briefing by the Assistant Secretary-General in consultations of the whole, the Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2007/21), in which it condemned in the strongest terms the terrorist attack of 24 June which targeted the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and killed six United Nations peacekeepers of the Spanish contingent, including Colombian nationals. The Council commended the determination and commitment

of the Government of Lebanon to bring the perpetrators of the attacks to justice. The Council reaffirmed its full support to UNIFIL in carrying out its mandate in the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and appealed to all parties concerned to abide scrupulously by their obligation to respect the safety of UNIFIL and other United Nations personnel.

United Nations Disengagement Observer Force

On 12 June, the Council, in consultations of the whole, took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) (S/2007/331) covering the period from 2 December to 6 June 2007. The Council members supported the recommendation of the Secretary-General to extend the UNDOF mandate for a new six-month period.

Consultations of the whole were preceded by a private meeting of the Council with the troop-contributing countries to UNDOF, during which the members heard a briefing by the Director of the Asia and Middle East Division of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Lisa Buttenheim.

On 20 June, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 1759 (2007), by which it renewed the mandate of UNDOF until 31 December 2007, and requested the Secretary-General to submit, at the end of the period, a report on the situation and progress in the implementation of resolution 338 (1973). The adoption of the resolution was followed by the adoption of a presidential statement (S/PRST/2007/20) quoting paragraph 11 of the Secretary-General's latest report on UNDOF (S/2007/331), which stated "the situation in the Middle East is tense and is likely to remain so, unless and until a comprehensive settlement covering all aspects of the Middle East problem can be reached".

Iraq/Kuwait

On 6 June, Ambassador Yuli Vorontsov, the Secretary-General's High-Level Coordinator, briefed the Security Council, in consultations of the whole, on the twenty-fourth report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/321) pursuant to paragraph 14 of resolution 1284 (1999) on compliance by Iraq with its obligations regarding the repatriation or return of all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals or their remains and on the return of all Kuwaiti property, including archives, seized by Iraq. Although welcoming the positive cooperation of the Governments of Iraq, Kuwait and other members of the Tripartite Commission (United Kingdom, France and United States of America) and noting the recent positive identification of further human remains, the members of the Council regretted that there had been no further developments relating to the location of the missing national archive of Kuwait. Following the consultations, a statement to the press was agreed upon.

Multinational force and United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq

In a debate on 13 June, the Security Council was briefed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, on the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) pursuant to paragraph 30 of resolution 1546 (2004). It was followed by a statement by the representative of the United States on behalf of the multinational force in Iraq and a statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, Hoshyar Zebari. The members of the Council expressed their appreciation for ongoing United Nations support and encouraged

continued and robust United Nations assistance in support of the Iraqi people and Government. The Council members also condemned the attack on the holy shrines of Imam Ali al-Hadi and Imam Hassan al-Askari in Samarra carried out on 13 June. The meeting was preceded by consultations of the whole during which the Council members discussed the mandate of the multinational force, and certain arrangements for the Development Fund for Iraq and the International Advisory and Monitoring Board, as required by resolution 1723 (2006). The Council members agreed on their continuation, as stated in a statement to the press.

Non-proliferation

On 21 June, Ambassador Johan Verbeke, Permanent Representative of Belgium and Chairperson of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1737 (2006), gave a briefing to the Security Council on the implementation of resolutions 1737 (2006) and 1747 (2007) relating to the sanctions imposed on the Islamic Republic of Iran. He reported that the main focus of the Committee had been the adoption of guidelines for the Committee's work and dealing with notifications and requests for exemptions with respect to the measures imposed by those resolutions.

United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission

On 29 June, the Security Council adopted, by 14 votes in favour and one abstention, resolution 1762 (2007), by which it terminated the mandates of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) concerning Iraq. The Council also urged Iraq to continue to implement its commitment to the non-proliferation, non-development, non-production and non-use of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and to adhere to all applicable disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and related international agreements. The adoption of resolution 1762 (2007) was preceded by a debate with briefings from the Acting Executive Chairman of UNMOVIC, Demetrius Perricos, and the representative of the Director General of IAEA, Gustavo Zlauvinen, as well as an intervention by the Permanent Representative of Iraq.

Timor-Leste

On 29 June, the Security Council agreed on a statement to the press on Timor-Leste, in which the Council members expressed their full support for the holding of parliamentary elections in Timor-Leste on 30 June 2007. They called upon all parties in Timor-Leste to adhere to the principles of non-violence and to democratic and legal processes to ensure that the elections had a unifying impact and contributed to bringing the people of Timor-Leste together.

Europe

Cyprus

On 8 June, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Cyprus and Chief of Mission, Michael Møller, gave a briefing to the Council, in consultations of the whole, on the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), on the basis of the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/328). The Special

Representative noted the Secretary-General's recommendation that UNFICYP be extended for a further period of six months, until 15 December 2007. With regard to the implementation of the Agreement of 8 July 2006, he stressed the need for both leaders to honour their written commitment. He repeated his belief that the responsibility for finding a solution for Cyprus lay with the Cypriots themselves and that an active civil society could provide critical support to the political process. The consultations of the whole were preceded by a private meeting of the Council with the troop-contributing countries to UNFICYP.

On 15 June, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 1758 (2007), by which it extended the mandate of UNFICYP until 15 December 2007. The Council noted with regret the failure to date to implement the Agreement of 8 July 2006 and urged the leaders of both communities to act to start the process without delay in order to prepare the ground for fully-fledged negotiations leading to a comprehensive and durable settlement.

Security Council resolution 1244 (1999)

On 22 June, the Security Council held consultations of the whole on the Kosovo issue, based on a draft resolution introduced by European members of the Security Council, Germany and the United States. Although those consultations provided for a useful exchange of views, no agreement on the draft resolution could be reached.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

On 29 June, the Security Council adopted resolution 1764 (2007), by which it welcomed and agreed to the designation by the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council of Miroslav Lajcak as the next High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina. It also took note of the Steering Board's decision of 19 June that the Office of the High Representative will remain in place and continue to carry out its mandate, with the aim of closing by 30 June 2008.

Thematic issues

International Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda

In a debate held on 18 June, the Security Council was briefed on the completion strategy of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia by its President, Judge Fausto Pocar, and its Prosecutor, Carla del Ponte, and on the completion strategy of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda by its President, Judge Dennis Byron, and its Prosecutor, Hassan Bubacar Jallow. They reported steady progress towards completion of their mandates. The continuing impunity enjoyed by leaders responsible for the most serious crimes, however, gravely undermined efforts to bring justice to the victims and to maintain the Tribunals' credibility. In this regard they called for international assistance to encourage Member States to cooperate fully in efforts to apprehend the fugitives. During the discussion the members expressed concern about the cooperation of countries able to deliver the fugitives to the Tribunals and on the means of judging them after the period covered by the completion strategy. The representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as Rwanda, participated in the discussion in accordance with rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure.

Natural resources and conflict

On 25 June, the Security Council, under the Presidency of the Foreign Minister of Belgium, Karel de Gucht, held an open debate on the item entitled "Maintenance of international peace and security: natural resources and conflict". The Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, the President of the General Assembly, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, and the President of the Economic and Social Council, Dalius Čekuolis, emphasized the need for developing a coherent and coordinated approach within the United Nations, between the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council. Cooperation efforts should be broadened to regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. During the debate the members emphasized the need to strengthen the contributions of the existing sanctions committees in preventing the illegal exploitation of natural resources, underlined the importance of including concerns relating to the exploitation of natural resources in the mandates of United Nations missions and peacekeeping operations, and stressed the need for cooperation between the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission with a view to helping the States concerned, upon their request, to build their national capacity and good governance in respect of natural resources as a factor of sustainable development.

The debate was followed by the adoption of a presidential statement (S/PRST/2007/22), in which the Council recognized the role that natural resources can play in armed conflict and post-conflict situations.

Protection of civilians in armed conflicts

On 22 June, the Security Council held an open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, John Holmes, in his briefing to the Council, underlined the worrying situation faced by civilians in armed conflicts, including the deliberate or indiscriminate targeting of civilians and civilians displaced as a result of armed conflict. He also deplored the fact that in some conflict situations humanitarian personnel were no longer able to perform their task safely.

Following the briefing, the members of the Council reaffirmed that parties to armed conflict bear the primary responsibility to take all feasible steps to ensure the protection of affected civilians, many of them also noting a role for the international community when States were unable or unwilling to provide such protection. The Council members emphasized the need for prevention of conflict as a first protective tool, especially through mediation and good offices. In cases where conflict situations had emerged, it was of crucial importance to protect endangered civilians effectively, especially in conflicts where civilians have become the targets. Important steps could be taken, including strengthening the mandate of United Nations missions on the ground, bringing to an end the impunity of those responsible for endangering, hurting, or killing civilians, and establishing appropriate protective mechanisms on the ground.

Following the debate, the President of the Security Council read a statement to the press.

Security Council mission to Africa

From 14 to 21 June, a Security Council mission visited Africa. In Addis Ababa, the mission, led jointly by South Africa and the United Kingdom, had meetings with the Chairperson, Alpha Oumar Konaré, and other members of the African Union Commission, as well as with the African Union Peace and Security Council. In Accra, the mission met with the President of Ghana and Chairperson of the African Union, John A. Kufuor. Those meetings provided an opportunity to review the cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union in the maintenance of peace and security in Africa, and to conduct an exchange of views on building closer ties between the United Nations and the African Union regarding conflict prevention, mediation, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. At the end of the meetings, a joint communiqué was issued.

In Khartoum, on 17 June, the mission, led by South Africa and the United Kingdom met with the President and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sudan, reviewing the security, political and humanitarian situation in the country, especially in Darfur. The visit took place at a time when the United Nations and the African Union were in the process of finalizing their plans to develop an unprecedented partnership in Darfur.

In Abidjan, on 19 June, the mission, led by Peru, met with the President and the Prime Minister of Côte d'Ivoire, reviewing the situation of the country after the signature of the Ouagadougou Agreement, which contained a framework for the political transition in Côte d'Ivoire.

In Kinshasa, on 20 June, the mission, led by France, met with the President, members of Government, and the Bureau of the Senate and the National Assembly. The mission reviewed the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo following the general elections of 2006, the first democratic, national elections held in 40 years.

The mission also received briefings from representatives of United Nations peacekeeping operations in the Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The report of the mission is in document S/2007/421 and Corr.1.

Small arms

On 29 June, the Security Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2007/24), in which it noted with grave concern the destabilizing effect of illicit small arms and light weapons in many regions of the world. To facilitate further consideration of the question, the Council asked the Secretary-General to submit a biennial report, beginning in 2008, containing his analysis, observations and recommendations as well as his observations on the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects, of 2001.